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EDUCATION IN CHINA TODAY[1]

By

C. O. Arndt, Severin K. Turosienski, Tung Yuen Fong

Division of Comparative Education

THE CONDITIONS under which Chinese schools from the elementary to the university level are "carrying on" in wartime China are almost unbelievable to the American. Because of frequent moving, occasioned by bombings, fire, and retreat, most of the materials of instruction, such as books and experimental equipment, have been destroyed. The teachers must therefore improvise learning activities, and in so doing rely in considerable measure upon life, rather than book experiences as media of instruction. There are compensations which will grow out of this enforced search for meaningful learning activities, but the context out of which they grow is hardly conducive toward the best creative effort.

Classes are frequently held in scarred buildings, temples, or even out of doors. Students are, as a rule, inadequately nourished and clothed, thus further complicating the problem of instruction. The fight to live and learn despite these physical and mental handicaps continues unabated in the China of today.

The educational system of China has operated traditionally on the principle of developing leadership from the people. Since most schools were supported by the payment of tuition in local communities, a selective factor was present, but children were not excluded because of birth or social status of parents.

Professional careers in government were accessible only by way of competitive examinations. These were rigidly constructed and administered and were designed largely to determine the literary abilities of candidates. The opportunity to compete was generally open to all, though abuses of this privilege did occur from time to time. The system has been fundamentally altered in recent years, but the process of selecting government officials by examination continues to occupy an important place even today.

Employment of the criterion of literary proficiency in the government examinations served to gain acceptance for the same criterion in Chinese education where it functioned until the traditional examination system was abrogated at the beginning of the present century. Since 1928 a new educational system has been in process of organization. It is to be based upon principles designed to meet the needs of

[1] The Chinese characters on the title page read: Chin er tze chung kuo chiao hsio (Chinese Education Today).

modern China. The following externalization of these principles appears in the *Shao Tang Pao* on July 7, 1938:

> Equal development of mental, moral, and physical training;
> Incorporation of literary and military characters into one;
> Equal emphasis on agricultural and industrial needs;
> Linking educational aims with political aims;
> Closer coordination between home education and school education;
> Preserving Chinese classics by scientific methods;
> More intensive study of natural science;
> Introducing new ideas into social science;
> Equalizing educational development in all localities and popularizing mass education in line with social and home education (7, p. 92).[2]

Though the Constitution of the Republic of China has not as yet become operative, due to the war, its pronouncements are of definite import to any study of contemporary China since they externalize official thought up to the time of the outbreak of the war. Part VII, articles 131–138, which deals exclusively with education, is here quoted:

Part VII.—Education

Art. 131.—The educational aim of the Republic of China shall be to develop a national spirit, to cultivate a national morality, to train the people for self-government and to increase their ability to earn a livelihood, and thereby to build up a sound and healthy body of citizens.

Art. 132.—Every citizen of the Republic of China shall have an equal opportunity to receive education.

Art. 133.—All public and private educational institutions in the country shall be subject to State supervision and amenable to the duty of carrying out the educational policies formulated by the State.

Art. 134.—Children between six and twelve years old are of school age and shall receive elementary education free of tuition.

Art. 135.—All persons over school age who have not received an elementary education shall receive supplementary education free of tuition.

Art. 136.—In establishing universities and technical schools, the State shall give special consideration to the needs of the respective localities so as to afford the people thereof an equal opportunity to receive higher education, thereby hastening a balanced national cultural development.

Art. 137.—Educational appropriations shall constitute no less than fifteen percent of the total amount of the budget of the Central Government and no less than thirty percent of the total amount of the provincial, district and municipal budgets respectively.

Educational endowment funds independently set aside in accordance with law shall be safeguarded.

Educational expenditures in needy provinces shall be subsidized by the central treasury.

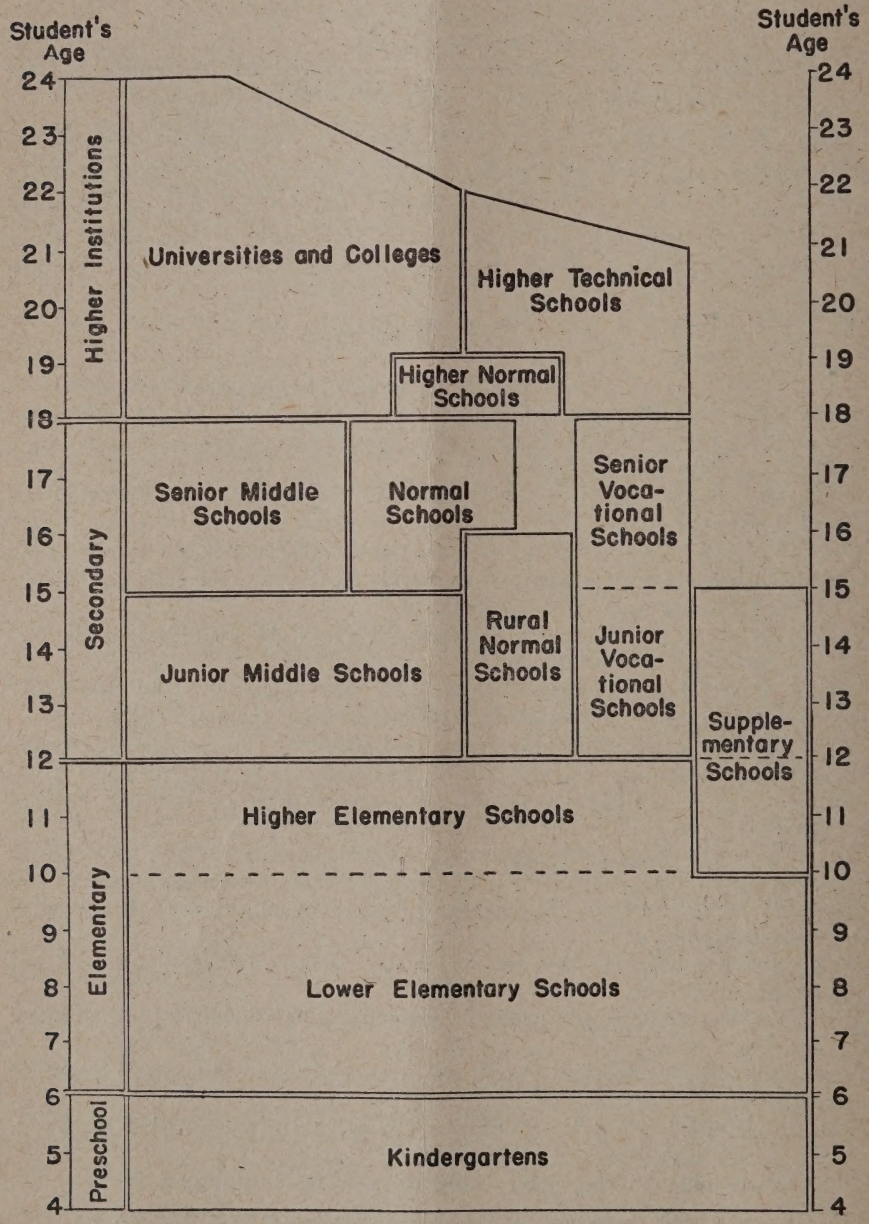
Art. 138.—The State shall encourage or subsidize the following persons or enterprises:

1. Educational enterprises established by private persons within the State, with a high record of achievement.
2. Educational enterprises for Chinese citizens residing abroad.

[2] The first number within the parentheses refers to the reference listed in the bibliography.

3. Those who have made academic or technical inventions and discoveries.
4. Teachers who have good records and long service.
5. Students who achieve high scholastic attainments and show good conduct but are unable to receive further education. (19, pp. 22–23.)

In order to provide a quick overview of modern Chinese education, the following chart has been prepared. It begins with the kindergarten and extends to the graduate school level.



CHINESE SCHOOL SYSTEM

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

In the year 1935 the National Government launched a plan which was designed gradually to achieve universal school attendance for all children of elementary school age. The outbreak of the war in 1937 largely thwarted the execution of this plan. Despite the difficulties which obtain, however, the enrollment of children in elementary schools continues to be stressed. According to the latest figures of the Ministry of Education there were 22,424,884 pupils in 232,145 schools of China in 1942. (4, p. 10.)

The typical elementary school in China offers a 6-year program, the first 4 years of which constitute the lower school; the last 2, the higher school. The courses offered and the time allowed for each course are set forth in the following table.[3]

Program of Studies for the 6-Year Elementary School

Subject of instruction	Minutes a week, by year [1]					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Chinese	390	390	390	390	390	390
Social studies	90	90	120	120	180	180
Natural sciences	90	90	120	120	150	150
Mathematics	60	150	180	240	210	210
Civics	60	60	60	60	60	60
Hygiene	60	60	60	60	60	60
Physical education	150	150	150	150	180	180
Manual training	90	90	120	120	150	150
Drawing	90	90	90	90	90	90
Music	90	90	90	90	90	90
Total	1, 170	1, 260	1, 380	1, 440	1, 560	1, 560

[1] Teaching periods vary from 30 to 60 minutes in length. The total teaching and learning periods for each grade are given as averages. Each school may adjust its time to community needs by adding to or subtracting from the total teaching and learning periods within a range of 90 minutes.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Until recently, Chinese secondary schools have been permitted to develop in areas which were best able to support them, without consideration of geographical location. Since the wealthy trade centers of China were largely situated on the coast or along navigable water routes these areas quickly developed secondary schools, while the inland provinces with which communication was difficult, failed to build such schools in large numbers. In recent years the Ministry of Education has attempted to remedy this situation with some success. It has established the principle of dividing provinces into secondary school districts based upon such criteria as population, transportation facilities, financial resources, and local culture status. This principle

[3] This table was derived from *School Laws and Regulations*, issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education, March 1934. pp. 442–443.

has become operative in inland provinces such as Szechwan and Ningsia, which were off the beaten path, until the present war drove millions of people inland and caused these "remote" provinces to assume a new importance in the life of China.

As seen from the chart on the Chinese School System (p. 4), secondary education includes normal, vocational, junior, and senior middle schools. These schools may be public or private, except for the normal schools which are public.

Recent statistics of the Ministry of Education list 2,819 institutions of secondary education which include 374 normal schools and 332 vocational schools. Since 1938 the Ministry of Education has established 18 national secondary schools in Free China, with an average enrollment of 1,000 to 1,500 students. According to the official China Handbook of 1943, the total number of national secondary schools is now 56. These include 25 national secondary schools, 15 national normal schools, and 16 national vocational schools.

The straight 6-year system has been *nominally* operative since 1922 and will in time, presumably, supplant the 3-year junior and 3-year senior middle school division. Nevertheless, the 3–3 organization employed in the tables which follow, continues to be used along with the straight 6-year system.

Program of Studies for the 3-Year Junior Middle School

Subject of instruction	Hours a week, by year					
	I		II		III	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
Chinese	6	6	6	6	6	6
English [1]	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mathematics	4	4	5	5	5	5
Natural science:						
Botany	2	2				
Zoology	2	2				
Chemistry			4	3		
Physics					4	3
History	2	2	2	2	2	2
Geography	2	2	2	2	2	2
Civics	2	2	2	2	1	1
Physical education	3	3	3	3	3	3
Hygiene	1	1	1	1	1	1
Manual training	2	2	2	2	4	4
Drawing	2	2	2	2	1	1
Music	2	2	1	1	1	1
Total instructional periods a week	35	35	35	34	35	34
Total supervised study periods a week	13	13	13	14	13	14

[1] In communities in which Mongolians, Moslems, or Tibetans form majority groups, the study of their respective languages is required along with English and Chinese.

Subject of instruction	Hours a week, by year					
	I		II		III	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
Chinese	5	5	5	5	5	5
English [1]	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mathematics	4	4	3	3	4	2
Chemistry			7	6		
Biology	5	5				
Physics					6	6
Ethics						2
Civics	2	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Hygiene		2				
Military education	3	3	3	3		
Chinese history	4	2	2			
Chinese geography	2	2	2			
World history				2	2	2
World geography				2	2	2
Drawing	1	1	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total instructional periods a week	34	34	34	33	31	31
Total supervised study periods a week, including field trips	26	26	26	27	29	29

[1] In communities in which Mongolians, Moslems, or Tibetans form majority groups, the study of their respective languages is required along with English and Chinese.

EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

The education of teachers is today confined to institutions which are controlled and supported by the government, either local or national. Separate classes or schools are maintained for young men and young women.

The normal schools may be divided into the following four types:

1. *Rural normal schools,* which admit graduates of a 6-year elementary school and offer a 4-year program of studies. Their purpose is to train teachers for work in rural primary schools.

2. *Normal schools.*—These schools require the completion of a junior middle school for admission and offer a 3-year program of studies. Their graduates are certified to teach in elementary schools.

3. *Higher normal schools,* which provide a 1-year program of studies. Admission requirements include graduation from a senior middle or normal school. They train teachers for junior middle schools. In recent years most of these schools have been reorganized into 4-year teachers colleges.

4. *Normal colleges and teachers colleges* train teaching personnel for junior and middle schools as well as for normal schools. They require graduation from senior middle schools or normal schools for admission. Their programs extend over a period of 4 years.

The curriculum of normal schools includes: Chinese, civics, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, hygiene, logic,

introduction to education, educational psychology, educational measurement and statistics, primary school subjects and methods of teaching, primary school administration, practice teaching, physical education, military drill (military first aid for girls), manual training, art, and music. Additional courses are provided trainees who are preparing for specialized services.

Subjects included in the curriculum of normal colleges and teachers colleges are as follows:

First year.—The three principles of the people; Chinese; English; educational psychology; history of modern civilization; general principles of education; biology.

Second year.—The same subjects as are offered in the first year, with the exception that general principles of education are replaced by pedagogical sociology.

Third year.—School administration; primary school administration; general methods of teaching in elementary schools; administration of secondary schools.

Fourth year.—School inspection; school curricula; principles of education; and trends in education. There are also a number of elective subjects. (3, pp. 92–93)

"At present," according to Chen Li-fu (4, p. 10), "there are nine national normal colleges, one at Nantien, Hunan Province; one at Chengku, Shensi; one for girls at Peisha, Szechwan; one at Kweiyang, Kweichow; and five incorporated in national universities, namely: Central, Sun Yat-sen, Chekiang, Szechwan, and Southwestern Associated Universities. One of the more important innovations in normal education is the improvement in treatment of teachers. They may now enjoy government support in full."

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational education has had a long history in China though it has functioned traditionally not through the school, but through a system of trade apprenticeships. Parents who were unable to send their son to school placed him with a skilled craftsman, in order that he might learn a trade through direct experience. Thus carpenters and tailors and metal workers were trained.

The first technical school was founded in Foochow in 1867. This school trained navigation pilots. Twelve years later a telecommunication school was established in Tientsin, and in 1882 another school with similar purpose was set up at Shanghai. Other technical schools were gradually added, for example, a school of sericulture in Kaoan, Kiangsi, in 1896.

With the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1912 vocational education experienced a decided upward trend.

According to a survey made by the China Vocational Education Institute in 1922, there were 842 vocational schools in China. Of that number

48 percent were agricultural, 18 percent commercial, 12 percent industrial, and 22 percent miscellaneous. Schools for men constituted 88 percent, while the remaining 12 percent were for women. . . . With the adoption in November 1922 of the new educational system with 6 years of primary school, 6 years of middle school, and 4 years of college, vocational schools ranked with middle schools. Above the vocational school there were technical colleges. Up to 1929, 219 vocational schools had been established on the new basis. They had 26,609 students, 7.8 percent of the total number of students in 10,045 middle schools. Besides, there were 4,000 short-term training schools for farmers with 80,675 students; 193 schools for laborers with 15,043 students; 151 schools for merchants with 10,506 students; 299 schools for women with 11,959 students; and 718 schools for people of sundry other trades with 29,549 students. Prior to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War on July 7, 1937, the number of vocational schools in China had been increased to 494 with 56,822 students (10, p. 205).

The war has increased tremendously the demand for skilled workmen. Many trade schools were destroyed by the Japanese, but the Ministry of Education took energetic measures to develop new schools in Free China. In 1938–39, 256 vocational schools with a total enrollment of 31,897 students were reported; 2 years later, the number had increased to 332 schools with a total enrollment of 47,503 (4, p. 32).

In 1938 the Ministry of Education divided Free China into three districts for purposes of vocational education: Szechwan-Sikang, Northwest, and Southwest. In each of these districts at least one national technical college was established as a center for the development of technical education. Factories, farms, and cooperatives were set up to provide direct experience for students.

Junior vocational schools under the direction of local education authorities have been developed in interior cities. These have been supplemented by many short courses often given in factories and business establishments by the regular staffs of these establishments.

The training of engineers and other technicians continues to be carried out by engineering and technical colleges. China "has 25 engineering colleges established either in her universities or as independent institutions. In these colleges there are a total of 22 departments of architecture, 11 departments of mechanical engineering, 12 departments of electrical engineering, 10 departments of chemical engineering, 3 departments of construction, 3 departments of river conservancy, 3 departments of aviation, 7 departments of mining, 1 department of surveying, 2 departments of textiles, 1 department of machinery and electricity, and 1 department of agricultural irrigation. These aggregate 76 vocational and technical departments" (10, p. 209).

With her large assets in manpower and wealth of natural resources it appears reasonable to assume that China, having realized through war the importance of a larger measure of industrialization if she is to maintain herself in the world of tomorrow, will make rapid strides in

this direction as peace returns. In this task of industrialization the schools of China may play an important role. Recent developments indicate that they will.

MASS EDUCATION

The effort to develop a larger degree of literacy in China is evidenced particularly in the program of the Chinese elementary school. As already stated, universal education at this level is the ideal toward the realization of which China is striving. In the meantime, however, the adult population must likewise be afforded opportunity to develop a larger degree of literacy. To this end a National Conference of People's Education was held in Chungking in March 1940. At this meeting the 5-year plan for people's education which had previously been adopted by the Executive Yuan was considered and adopted.

> According to the plan, there should be during the first 2 years at least one people's school in every three *pao*. (The *pao* is at once a civic and a military unit for both peace and war times. Each *pao* consists of 6 to 15 *chia* and each *chia* consists of 6 to 15 families. Six to fifteen *pao* make a village.) In this way there should be more than 260,000 people's schools for the 800,000 *pao* of the nation at the end of the first 2 years. Each people's school consists of three divisions; for men, women, and children. During the second 2 years there should be at least one people's school in every two *pao*. In the fifth and last year there should be at least 800,000 people's schools for the 800,000 *pao* of the country, besides 80,000 or more nucleus or village schools and 200,000 schools of similar grade now existing, which can be improved, to provide education for at least 90 percent of the children of school age (4, p. 11).

The subjects of instruction for adults include reading and writing, good citizenship, development of self-control, discussion of international affairs. Instruction in these fields is carried on through public reading centers, cinemas, broadcasts, traveling troupes, and libraries.

Recent reports indicate that steady progress is being made toward the realization of the 5-year educational plan. In such provinces as Szechwan, Yunnan, Kweichow, Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Hunan, and Hupeh the program has already entered its second year. In these provinces more than 50 percent of the illiterate adults are now receiving some form of regular instruction.

HIGHER EDUCATION

As in the case of secondary schools, the colleges and universities of China have developed largely in the cities of the coast and Yangtze River valley. The Nanking-Shanghai area, for example, housed about one-third of the higher institutions of learning prior to the outbreak of the war in 1937.

Since the Japanese plan of invasion was pointed toward the systematic occupation of precisely these rich centers, the higher-educational institutions of the country suffered a crippling, though not a fatal blow.

Buildings, libraries, and equipment were largely wiped out. Of the 108 colleges and universities which were in operation in 1937 all but 12 have been forced to move their sites inland. Some have moved several times. But move they did, and despite this fact their numbers increased to 132 by 1942. The student bodies, too, grew from 41,609 in 1936 to 57,832 in early 1942 (4, p. 3).

Under the National Conscription Law all male citizens between the ages of 18 and 45 are subject to military service. There is a proviso, however, in reference to college students to the effect that students under 25 may delay their services as long as they remain in college. A special program of educational service is required of these students in addition to regular military instruction which has for some time been a regular part of college work. This service includes cooperative effort in mass education, relief work, and other forms of social work either with the Army or with the civilian population.

Colleges are offering many short service courses in preparation for work in industry and the professions. The curriculum of the regular students, too, is being modified as the war progresses, to the end that immediate needs be served. Information on the precise nature of this change is not readily available. The general rule of some years' standing, that one of the three colleges necessary to constitute a university must be a college of science, continues to be enforced. Proportionately no more new students are admitted to the arts colleges than to the colleges of science. Thus, apparently, a study of scientific subjects is being accorded systematic emphasis in modern China.

* * * * * * *

The great Chinese philosopher, Confucius, often dwelt upon the importance and indeed the necessity of popular education, placing it next after mere physical sustenance for the people. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

> When the Master was traveling to Wei, Jan Yu drove him. "What a numerous population," remarked the Master. "The people having grown so numerous, what next should be done for them?" asked Jan Yu. "Enrich them," was the reply. "And when you have enriched them, what next should be done?" he asked. "Educate them," was the answer. (17, ch. IX).

Despite unique handicaps occasioned by an invasion of her best developed educational centers during the present war, China is today demonstrating an unshakable confidence in public education. Her respect and concern for education are age-old, but never in her educational history has she made a more heroic effort to achieve a maximally wide distribution of educational opportunities for all.

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